

Jonathan Lethem

Quotes

*Writing, Book, Art, People, Want, Thinking, Character, Artist, Way, Heart,
Reading, World, Hate, Moving, Mean, Sky, Beautiful, Order, Pages, Children*

I try not to become too regular an addict of any one subculture.

~Jonathan Lethem

I never take any notes or draw charts or make elaborate diagrams, but I hold an image of the shape of a book in my head and work from that mental hologram.

~Jonathan Lethem

I've never related to the work geek at all-it sounds much more horrible than nerd. Like a freak biting a chicken's head off in a sideshow.

~Jonathan Lethem

I learned to write fiction the way I learned to read fiction - by skipping the parts that bored me.

~Jonathan Lethem

Someday I would change my name to Shut Up and save everybody a lot of time.

~Jonathan Lethem

I work on a laptop specifically so I can work in cafes and pretend I'm part of the human world.

~Jonathan Lethem

What age is a black boy when he learns he's scary?

~Jonathan Lethem

It was only as I wrote about fear that I began to find paths of access to feelings that were intolerable to me then.

~Jonathan Lethem

I want what we all want," said Carl. "To move certain parts of the interior of myself into the exterior world, to see if they can be embraced.

~Jonathan Lethem

I can't bear the silent ringing in my skull.

~Jonathan Lethem

Some people have things written all over their faces; the big guy had a couple of words misspelled in crayon on his.

~Jonathan Lethem

The arts and a belief in the values of the civil rights movement, in the overwhelming virtue of diversity, these were our religion. My parents worshipped those ideals.

~Jonathan Lethem

I have no one to blame for the construction for myself, of course, but I'm always surprised and slightly sulky when I realize I'm people are buying the whole thing.

~Jonathan Lethem

My heart and the elevator, a plummet inside a plummet.

~Jonathan Lethem

I've always been uninterested in boundaries or quarantines between tastes and types, between mediums and genres.

~Jonathan Lethem

I keep one simple rule that I only move in one direction - I write the book straight through from beginning to end. By following time's arrow I keep myself sane.

~Jonathan Lethem

I had always wanted to be a writer who confused genre boundaries and who was read in multiple contexts.

~Jonathan Lethem

Art is about eliminating almost everything in order to focus on the thing that you need to talk about.

~Jonathan Lethem

I'm a firm believer that there are no rules in art. Every trajectory is different.

~Jonathan Lethem

It's now expected of me that I will defy expectation, so I really generally seem to be free to write what I want.

~Jonathan Lethem

Comics? Honestly, that's more a matter of nostalgia for me. I think most of that energy has gone to my love of literature, and my love of film...

~Jonathan Lethem

I'd have been a filmmaker or a cartoonist or something else which extended from the visual arts into the making of narratives if I hadn't been able to shift into fiction.

~Jonathan Lethem

What's lucky about my career in general is that I stumbled into what every writer most wants. Not repeating myself and doing strange things has become my trademark.

~Jonathan Lethem

Discomfort is very much part of my master plan.

~Jonathan Lethem

The book is openly a kind of spiritual autobiography, but the trick is that on any other level it's a kind of insane collage of fragments of memory.

~Jonathan Lethem

My heart, to put it more simply, got nostalgic for the present. Always a

bad sign.

~Jonathan Lethem

I don't paint anymore. I haven't since I abandoned it at 19, in order to begin writing seriously.

~Jonathan Lethem

When the civil rights battle was won, all the Jews and hippies and artists were middle class white people and all the blacks were still poor. Materially, not much changed.

~Jonathan Lethem

The kernel, the soul - let us go further and say the substance, the bulk, the actual and valuable material of all human utterances - is plagiarism.

~Jonathan Lethem

I plan less and less. It's a great benefit of writing lots, that you get good at holding long narratives in your head like a virtual space.

~Jonathan Lethem

I just noticed recently that in one book after another I seem to find an excuse to find some character who, to put it idiotically simply, is allowed to talk crazy.

~Jonathan Lethem

Nerds are just deep, and neurotic, fans. Needy fans. We're all nerds, on one subject or another.

~Jonathan Lethem

All paths lead nowhere; choose one with heart...

~Jonathan Lethem

Fantastic writing in English is kind of disreputable, but fantastic writing

in translation is the summit.

~Jonathan Lethem

To the resentment that hides inside love, to the loneliness that hides among companions.

~Jonathan Lethem

There were days when no kid came out of his house without looking around. The week after Halloween had a quality both hungover and ominous, the light pitched, the sky smashed against the rooftops.

~Jonathan Lethem

I'd excluded New York from my writing, and then I came back and I fell in love with it all over again... The energy comes from an absence, that yearning for New York when you are not there.

~Jonathan Lethem

Teenage life - possibly adult life too is all about what you want and can't have. And then about what you receive and misuse.

~Jonathan Lethem

I guess they needed a maze in Japan, where everything's neat and tidy. In America everybody's already wandering around lost.

~Jonathan Lethem

The key to mostly anything is pretending your first time isn't.

~Jonathan Lethem

I got into underground comics fairly early on and kind of wandered away from the superhero stuff, but I was an art student and I was drawing a lot as a kid.

~Jonathan Lethem

When people call something "original," 9 out of 10 times they just don't

know the references or original sources involved.

~Jonathan Lethem

There's never any percentage in being ahead of your time.

~Jonathan Lethem

Life is fundamentally up for grabs

~Jonathan Lethem

Reading and writing are the same thing; it's just one's the more active and the other's the more passive. They flow into each other.

~Jonathan Lethem

Every artist has limits. No one can do everything. It's impossible.

~Jonathan Lethem

What's beautiful about art is that it circumscribes a space, a physical and mental space. If you try to put the entire world into every page, you turn out chaos.

~Jonathan Lethem

Music still sort of hangs up there in the sky for me as this thing that moves me so much, but I can't really make it. It's like a car I can't drive.

~Jonathan Lethem

You can't be deep without a surface

~Jonathan Lethem

With a book you can read the same paragraph four times. You can go back to page 21 when you're on page 300. You can't do that with film. It just charges ahead.

~Jonathan Lethem

Good films demand to be looked at several times in order to be

observed completely.

~Jonathan Lethem

Apologies aren't something you want to get in the habit of practicing in the mirror

~Jonathan Lethem

I listen to music all the time. I write while listening to music. And I tell myself that the music nourishes the art forms that I do master and domesticate, and have authority over.

~Jonathan Lethem

Nature, or at least birds and women, abhorred the invisible man.

~Jonathan Lethem

Yes! I'm the slowest comic-book writer on Earth.

~Jonathan Lethem

You could grow up in the city where history was made and still miss it all.

~Jonathan Lethem

Writing is a private discipline, in a field of companions.

~Jonathan Lethem

what exactly is postmodernism, except modernism without the anxiety?

~Jonathan Lethem

The past is still visible. The buildings haven't changed, the layout of the streets hasn't changed. So memory is very available to me as I walk around.

~Jonathan Lethem

Writing is physical for me. I always have the sense that the words are

coming out of my body, not just my mind.

~Jonathan Lethem

Every book is a kind of experiment in doing something that feels impossible.

~Jonathan Lethem

The more film I watch, the more John Ford looks like a giant. His politics aren't so good, and you have to learn to accept John Wayne as an actor, but he's a poet in black and white.

~Jonathan Lethem

As much as I care about historical context - I'm very eager to read a really great historical account.

~Jonathan Lethem

Once you fall into habits, I think, you're dead as an artist. You have to challenge yourself and never rest on your laurels, never think about what you've done in the past.

~Jonathan Lethem

Writing is a necessity and often a pleasure, but at the same time, it can be a great burden and a terrible struggle.

~Jonathan Lethem

There's something about the rhythms of language that correspond to the rhythms of our own bodies.

~Jonathan Lethem

What I'm constantly striving for in my prose is clarity. So that, ideally, the writing will become so transparent that the reader will forget that the medium of communication is language.

~Jonathan Lethem

I want to write books that can be read a hundred years from now, and readers wouldn't be bogged down by irrelevant details.

~Jonathan Lethem

The computer is the way I'm making books, but I still think about the physical properties. I visualize the length of a book, the proportions of a book, in material terms.

~Jonathan Lethem

I don't have a lot of paper in my immediate work environment, except when I'm doing things like checking the godforsaken proofs.

~Jonathan Lethem

Making books has always felt very connected to my bookselling experience, that of wanting to draw people's attention to things that I liked, to shape things that I liked into new shapes.

~Jonathan Lethem

I prefer old books and find them more relevant. I dislike new books. It's like drinking wine that's not ready.

~Jonathan Lethem

I don't want to indulge myself in the luxury of writing beautiful paragraphs just for the sake of making beautiful writing. That doesn't interest me. I want everything to be essential.

~Jonathan Lethem

I suppose in a way most of my characters are non-consumers, not terribly interested in all the little baubles and artifacts of contemporary life.

~Jonathan Lethem

By removing the stories from the morass of things that surround us, I'm hoping to achieve some kind of purer approach to emotional life.

~Jonathan Lethem

I don't really ask of myself a given word or page count or number of hours. To work every day, that's my only fetish. And there is a physical quality to it when a novel is thriving.

~Jonathan Lethem

When I write lyrics, I really do go into an automatic folk appropriation mode... I see the vernacular register of 20th century song as being a bunch of forms to adapt and reconfigure.

~Jonathan Lethem

I met someone who lives in an elevator.

~Jonathan Lethem

Develop your pawns or Hulk will smash.

~Jonathan Lethem

I'm learning to hate the sound of my own voice.

~Jonathan Lethem

I hate feeling too complacent when I write. I like to be solving new problems.

~Jonathan Lethem

I'm gregarious with writers and never with manuscripts . . . I [like to] create the illusion of seamless perfection, so I alone know the flawed homely process along the way.

~Jonathan Lethem

I'm not planning what I listen to, except when I think the music can guide me to some emotional place I want to be reminded of.

~Jonathan Lethem

I have a horror of silence while I'm writing. It's like the universe is howling at me if I don't have it.

~Jonathan Lethem

I'm not too embarrassed to say I'm the definition of the target audience. This is my generation, the one of exalting music in album form.

~Jonathan Lethem

I had an all-Fear of Music iPod, just versions of the 11 songs from the record. No other songs allowed.

~Jonathan Lethem

When Rolling Stone handed me this crazy assignment to be in the studio with James Brown, they had the misapprehension that I'd written for them already just because I claimed my character had.

~Jonathan Lethem

I don't write about anything I don't love even if that love sometimes gets all screwed up and tormented.

~Jonathan Lethem

I hate libraries for the way they put stickers on things. I don't approve of folding over pages, or of writing in books. God, forget scissors - that's beyond the pale.

~Jonathan Lethem

I tend to think of myself as a highly emotional writer. It's all coming out of the deepest feelings, out of dreams, out of the unconscious.

~Jonathan Lethem

Novelists get to direct the perfect films. We get to cast every part. We dress the set exactly as we wish.

~Jonathan Lethem

One of the things that novels have tended not to concentrate on over the centuries is the fact that people read books.

~Jonathan Lethem

No matter how enormous a novel may become, the physical act of reading determines that there's no way it can become a communal experience. To read is intimate. It's almost masturbatory.

~Jonathan Lethem

The world's large enough and interesting enough to take a different approach each time you sit down to write about it.

~Jonathan Lethem

Consensual reality is both fragile and elastic, and it heals like the skin of a bubble.

~Jonathan Lethem

In the sea of words, the in print is foam, surf bubbles riding the top. And it's a dark sea, and deep, where divers need lights on their helmets and would perish at the lower depths.

~Jonathan Lethem

Waves, sky, trees, Essrog - I was off the page now, away from the grammar of skyscrapers and pavement.

~Jonathan Lethem

For me, music is sort of the art that I can't incorporate into my person the way I want to.

~Jonathan Lethem

Anyone could see it all coming and no one could possibly stop it and that was the beautiful thing. Friday night was open wide and writ in stone

~Jonathan Lethem

As I get older I find that the friendships that are the most certain, ultimately, are the ones where you and the other person have made substantial amounts of money for one another.

~Jonathan Lethem

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